



# **GROUP 74**

**POEMS FROM THE LAST BOHEMIA**

**THE NEW YORK POETS'  
COOPERATIVE**







# **GROUP 74**

## **POEMS FROM THE NEW YORK POETS' COOPERATIVE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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In April, 1969 the New York Poets' Cooperative was founded by Sabina Roseman and a number of other writers from the metropolitan area who believed that by working together and sharing their writing problems they could improve their own creativity and also foster an appreciation of poetry around New York. Thus the activity of the organization today is concentrated on two levels: the writing, editing, criticizing, public reading, and publishing of the members' own works; and the sponsoring of public poetry readings for non-member poets in order to enable the public, at little or no cost, to hear gifted but lesser-known poets read their own works. The Cooperative sponsors fifty regular public poetry readings a year and also, upon request, provides poets for readings at libraries, churches, Y's, and radio-stations. The organization is completely democratic and not committed to any particular school or style of poetry. New members are admitted solely on the basis of the quality of their work, and all members share equally in performing necessary tasks.

It is fitting then that on its fifth anniversary the Cooperative should publish an anthology displaying a cross-section of its writings. Hopefully *Group 74* will suggest that the art of poetry is alive in the New York area, in varied and vibrant forms.

— *Robert Kramer*  
*Winter, 1974*



**GROUP 74:  
POEMS FROM THE  
NEW YORK POETS' COOPERATIVE**



## **JACOB BUSH**

### **REMEMBRANCE OF INSUBORDINATIONS PAST**

i sat with the multimillionaire  
in flatlands brooklyn land of loss  
of perspective  
where photos appear out of nowhere  
with men sliding under closed doors  
sliding slid by upright memoranda  
proclaiming “rotten business for sale . . .  
rotten location” and i sat with him  
(the multimillionaire) in his formica  
table-top convertible moon rocket  
(the kind that reverses itself  
like a super-mutant turtle  
when it reaches the table’s edge)  
but really it was only a company station wagon  
but the multimillionaire was real  
and ninety-three  
and kept right on working  
and wheeling  
and stealing  
(to promote his philanthropies)  
and he pummeled the air with his fists  
as ulysses simpson grant stared from both  
his amber-verdant eyes  
and cried out “well after all . . .  
what does a young man want?”  
and i softly answered “love”  
and his mouth fell apart  
and he fell back and died

# **EDWARD BUTSCHER**

## **THREE THEORIES OF FIELD COMPOSITION**

### I

#### *semanticism*

I love seasons.

I love the season, the seasonal sway  
of color and form,

not so much

for the tangible sap,  
syrup-scented blood  
in steel restraint,

though that has its sentient pleasures,  
though that has its sensuous refrains,

harsh leather-brown bark being ripped  
down into cameo snows by the satin  
antlers of a spider

tumbling bones  
like naked sinners

into summer's  
rose-thorn flames,

plaster milk,  
molten dust,  
sudden air

sucked from heaven's luscious heaps  
of gray upon gray bodies,

bouquet and bodice  
of sullen ashes

untinctured by Italian psalms,  
untouched by Italian palms,

salt embers  
of a pollen  
imperative

to flare flowers into resurrections,

autumn flocks exploding from global urns,  
expressions, my love,  
of seminal relief,

sun-banished lover arms  
                                lipping seeds,  
                                stitching stars  
into languid rainbow  
unions                        consecrating all,  
                                consuming night,  
a moan of winter  
not even for this, its fecund images:

stone toe and  
rusty talon  
                                for whatever velvet ideal  
                                has survived childhood  
  diseases,

dreamy love murders and books,  
of militant woes, wary worms,  
                                easy  
                                compound  
                                allegories

of leafy youth and frosty age,  
life and death phrases smoothing down symbol-gnarled  
rivers, icon-stuffed corpses,  
risen banks,  
hanging trees,  
mountain flights,  
the suicide of gods

                                and their raucous idioms  
                                of armored  
  rue, rue, rue,

twilight sighs,  
                                breathing awake infant-pink dawns,  
awkward strangers mouthing man's  
seven stages,

lapping plows into spears,  
chewing spears into chains,  
complexes of cherry Christs  
like paper lollipop parades, featherless  
yarrow stalks  
scratching  
masks of dolor  
in virgin  
dust.

O

no

I love the steel reason outside it,  
I love the machine gears inside it,  
the pure idea of it,  
the pure evil of it,  
the pure good of it,

the absolute and  
implacable wheel

of its coming  
and its going,

the cold mind of its blind root senses  
fumbling at alien leaf orders in the wind,  
pawing black space vacuums into ovaries  
with its silver limbs, tips, slipping  
into an onion moon  
with long potato eyes,  
blasting tunnel eyes  
in the soft-bodied coal  
where ships break apart,

whales heave,

and leave their ribs  
in luminous maps,

white traces  
of an acid  
art.

## II

### *sentimentalism*

See an old man, be more precise,  
alligator skin like an ill-fitting shirt  
(archaic, that), bunched at the neck,  
splotched with baby lungs that wail at each  
painful movement,

scrawny birch sapling leaping  
in ostrich strokes between  
the pair of ivory tusks, yellowed, honed  
by the strop of a woman's tongue, frayed, I say,  
apple-slicers from mother Eve's  
fantasy factory.

See the tremble in his crowning hands,  
vein impressions of barren boughs,  
birdless and  
black,

perhaps,  
fleshed with ancient parchment designs,  
vague lands, seas, a lost Oriental kite  
(I like that

no end),  
filtered for smoking the charcoal  
of his gnarled and knobby years  
as they seek the earth peace of black woolen pants,  
insanely wrinkled at the empty pouch and crotch,  
nervously furrowing knots of fists  
into remembered fights,  
a forgotten artist  
flayed bare  
by fear.

See the eyes, jewels still (I demand it),  
cloudy though, glass stoppers  
for the acid pain within,  
obtuse, too, yes, but not obsolete,  
romantic as all hell in there, turfs

of lifeless, colorless grass, a frozen field  
of knives, you fools, my skeletal lovelies,  
walking me into summer fires,  
cast adrift,

actually, atop a flaking skull  
in an empty village,  
cannibal-glad,  
cannibal-gleam,  
cannibal-sharp  
as Gibraltar's bird-beaked gates,  
snowed by the cold  
ways of the world  
into the silence  
of not thinking:  
wanting only the stripping sun  
to bend, to kneel, to kiss  
his once-candied lips  
into a moan of contentment,  
furry as a purr  
below raw shouts,  
more studied songs,  
slippery  
as the sibilant salvation  
of the fatal  
womb,  
its night-still  
pivot,

bud

of a husked  
grasshopper humming  
batteries  
of shit flies  
shafting  
mama.

### III

#### *serpentism*

Survival, my love.  
Sucking on the stem  
of a simulated rose,  
I breathe it in,  
swallow its flames  
one by one  
to become a diamond snake  
pattern governing dawn's  
naked thigh stars,  
selfishly seeking  
a moment's stone cellar,  
darkness and felt life,  
wet bodies and  
long legs wrapping their icy grave joy  
around my bags of sadness.  
Petals, white,  
white as fleece,  
white as fleeced bones,  
white as water-lily beds,  
white as fresh hospital sheets  
for the brutally murdered moles,  
mangled in their mother's black hole  
by a playful priest  
and his pious  
tongues.  
Shed a tear.  
Release the rosary  
of bubble mendacities  
until my dead-man lips  
can moan and swell around  
their amino acid seas.

Vines, too,  
ripped from a theatre  
balcony, fragments of rope ladders  
now deader than sticks, pieces of stale tail  
to braid into a cable noose  
for every feat her  
legend that ever  
tickled art's  
bright fancy.

Sleep and sift gold-tooth smiles  
from the swan-soft ashes,  
if you must,  
an elegant finger bone,  
scholar lean,  
and its Japanese ring,  
bell and candle, then,  
curled around my book's  
blackest similes.

Autumn comes in.  
Autumn comes in bleeding,  
an abstract splash  
of senseless  
scarlet/  
rags  
like flags,  
like napkin flags.

Simpering sycophant of natural phenomena  
(to my friends), I murder no less  
the milk in my refrigerator chest,  
the meat in my mortal mind,  
still ripe  
and hot  
with expectations of another winter feast.

# **OLGA CABRAL KURTZ**

## **5 & DIME**

They were visitors to penny arcadias.  
They were people lost in subways.  
They were the poor seeking Layaway Plans.  
They were trapped in the hanging gardens  
of the giant 5 & Dime.

They were smelling the plastic flowers.  
They were reveling in mothproof forests.  
They were dazzled by bloodless blossoms:  
kodachrome fuchsias, whiter-than-whites,  
deadly reds, cryogenic blues.

There were angels guarding the exits  
in frightwigs. Bibles grew wild  
and abundant as shrunken heads.  
In and out of the tropical houseplants  
birds flew around in straitjackets.

The Queen of Sheba sold them corn-cures  
when they tired. They sat on the plastic grass.  
Picked plastic fruit from the plastic trees  
and admired how dewdrops hung motionless  
around the clock and season.

Was it heaven? Was it hell? It was wrinkle-proof  
and guaranteed not to bleed. It wasn't real  
but nobody minded. They were prisoners  
trapped in the nervous breakdown  
of the American Dream.

## AN OLD MAN IN CAMDEN

On the ghost ship of the Brooklyn Ferry  
an old man crosses the river  
to the far shores of wallpaper  
and the December seagulls  
filling the room with wingspread  
circle his head  
intoning  
his name's single syllable:

*Walt! —*

*Walt! Walt! Walt!*

Walt Whitman no longer thirty-six years  
sweet and negligent flesh cleanly joined  
but an old man dying  
old man come in his sad sick body  
to make the last crossing of the Brooklyn Ferry.

*Walt! Walt! Walt!*

Bird voices in tragic  
and rusty chorus —  
he shudders at what they know.

The huge birds hover  
eyes cold as arctic  
wastes but red  
red as foundry fires in the night  
or as the twenty-five thousand settings  
of the sun.

Scavengers  
grave robbers  
cruel grosbeaks  
they have come to see him off.

He is adrift on a vast  
oceanic hoard  
of paper:  
whitecaps, squalls, old packets  
of hurricanes  
the high seas of his poems.  
Words! words! words! words!  
Powerful as breakers  
boundless  
beyond wallpaper horizons  
and he is Oceanus of this realm  
this kingdom of vast swells.

Lone passenger:  
an empty  
ferryboat.  
Who calls him by his highest name?  
*Walt! Walt! Walt! Walt!*  
(Neptune, god of dark undertows.)  
There is salt in his beard.  
Alone in his room  
an old man weeping.

Words! words! words! words!  
He has crossed the great ocean:  
his endless poem  
that will beat and pound  
at all the shores and continents of the world.

## **VINNIE-MARIE D'AMBROSIO**

---

### **THE STORE AT THE BACK OF HER GARDEN**

Green vines  
like lakewaves in summer  
whisper in breadth  
rustle in height  
on three storeys  
of scarred brick  
at her garden's southern edge.  
Lights seem to whistle on the soft wall  
as they ripple  
down to her plants  
sinking with dusty tomatoes.

She thinks how odd  
that years ago  
behind the vines  
*(profound vines)*  
an old man ran a flowershop  
like a lion-tamer.  
Bursts  
of orchids and elephants' ears  
she remembers  
stood whipped and chopped and bleeding  
in cardboard jugs.  
But purple trumpets lie there now  
row on row  
dark and efflorescent —  
mysterious stoppered bottles  
filled with deep wines.  
Labels  
float above the shelves  
blossoming in the dimness.  
A doberman pinscher  
glides through the awning-shaded indoor air  
like a water moccasin.

## GAZE

(to E. V.)

What brown are your eyes,  
these sweet polished chestnuts?  
Are they the dimness  
in my grandmother's house?  
The wood of her bed,  
her shadowy primness and russet lace?  
The hermit piano in the corner  
with its shell drawn tight?  
The dark coffee vortices  
swirling hollow cells?  
No twilight wine swims brown as your gaze.  
My mind rolls down hills like a hoop in a wind.

# OPUS

(*to A.P.*)

I thought one day we'd  
build a mound  
of scarlet leaves  
ten horses high

like a merry church

and near it plant  
a window-glass  
filled with faces  
of Sharon-roses

back of which  
on autumn mornings  
I'd till an oven  
for mushrooming  
loaves  
or prune a summer  
chifferobe  
or irrigate  
the works  
of an English clock

and you'd warm a cloud  
of sheep with crumbs  
scooped  
from apples  
or comb a bush  
of early snow  
for syrup  
and arias of cardinals:

the mass —  
red flowers red fruit red sugar red song —  
has focused so long  
in this burning-glass.

## ON THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF BLUMA SACH'S DEATH

Who knew her —  
(God, all refused her!)  
the Polish refugee,  
caught seven times  
in the Jew net?

Old  
and fat  
and poor.

Halls of applause  
rattling  
in a patched brain.

At last we met  
and I wanted her  
inside my door.

She came.  
I poured the vermouth  
of old sunrises  
and said, *Borrow my piano*  
*in the mornings, Bluma.*

And her arms flew,  
and golden raisins  
gleamed at the elbow,  
and her dying skin  
was heaving dough.

Done, shoulders damp,  
she'd talk  
beneath the parrots and swans  
in the Roman garden  
painted on my wall.

Wild Schumann huddled  
beneath mute feathers,  
ghastly parades  
of brothers and children  
kissed with soft beaks,  
and I always said,  
*Tell me more!*

Once the pain pushed  
her to draw a line:  
It is not fine of you,  
she said.  
We stared at wine,  
and spoke no more of Poland.

In Warsaw's winter, once  
she bartered, she the ripe artist  
bartered her piano  
for a shredding quilt.  
My guilt is worse.  
I handed her a sieve of hours,  
and as return  
peered under old leaves  
at the haunted bird.

I will go into  
the small black room  
where my work lies scattered  
and the letters on the keys  
are trembling fires  
and the linoleum  
is a rag of ice  
under my penitent feet.

But Bluma, those mornings —  
how the bright rooms laughed with music  
while we wept!

# **RICHARD DAVIDSON**

## **DEATH OF A POET**

*(Remembering Hart Crane)*

I

He came and went and there was no reply.  
Only the sea said things aloud.  
Only the scorch of ocean dropping tea leaves in a glass.  
There was the rim of sun; there was the long boat and  
the crack of sky.  
There were the whispers in his ear; there were the voices  
of padded critics with empty pens  
There was the giant bridge that held his soul; there was the  
folk song of his body deep in the steel of his city.  
He came and went and there was no reply.

II

What thoughts flung themselves on the hard crusts of wave?  
What dreams swam in the pits of rock?  
He disturbed the night with a final call  
The stars distressed at the sight of death.  
Back to the safe womb; back to the hard beaches of first dawn,  
Off the deck of a slippery ship  
Off the main street of a shrunken town  
He waved one soft goodbye and the room of living was emptied.

### III

He saw America as a giant bridge  
Touched her buildings with the finger-tips of hands  
Lost in the blood of experience.  
His wounds were always exhibited.  
His mind resting on the printed page.  
The glories of the unknown dark filled the cellars of his brain  
So he moved quickly and loved too well  
So he held his breath against the shouts of spring  
So he died yearning in his thirty-third year,  
Misunderstood by the stiff halls of literary debate  
Hounded by the wolves of doubt  
A cry of stubborn life in the morning of death.

### IV

Now remember him for he wrote the songs  
The lost dream of America piercing his sky,  
The sense of living flesh; the acres of raw earth  
Clasping the hand of his memory.  
The vision of thundering futures; land of Whitman and peace  
Tearing before his eyes; spreading their messages of hope  
On flagstones of wind.  
He walked the deck of a foreign ship  
Slid beneath the foreign waters,  
Killed by indifferent firesides at home,  
Killed by empty mouths and roaring tongues.  
He came and went and there was no reply.  
Only the sea said things aloud.  
Only the scorch of ocean dropping tea leaves in a glass.  
Only the vision left strong and singing  
Before his dying eyes.

## PORTRAIT ONE

I

She moves in the vacancy of lighted rooms  
A shield of hostility burning the grass  
Immovable thoughts behind the strain of eyes  
The covering of empty childhoods screaming at the moon.  
She hides well the coming feelings  
That blossom in her throat like ruptured seeds  
That fill the skies of her life as unwanted children  
Pushing at pushing doors.  
She hides well but not well enough  
The need for additional agony  
That turns her body into a quivering mesa  
Of accepting stone.  
She hides well but not well enough  
The years of parched beds singing in useless sex  
The flesh of together flesh ending in smells  
And needless competition.  
She hides well but not well enough  
The long search for love and genuine reward.

II

Do not judge the judged for they have judged  
Themselves and found life guilty.  
She runs toward punishment like an unwashed sea  
And holds her hands in ridicule against the smoke of faces.  
She tears her dreams like sheets of paper  
Clutching emotional straws that draw neurotic fire.  
She traps herself and then yells *Trap!*  
She cries beauty and then destroys that beauty  
By crying too loudly or not crying at all.  
She throws a shadow against the snow  
And begs for imaginary entrances  
To a thousand imaginary halls.  
Do not judge the judged for they have judged  
themselves and found life guilty.

### III

She moves in the vacancy of lighted rooms  
A shield of hostility burning the grass  
Immovable thoughts behind the strain of eyes.  
In the night the yells from unfrocked nerves  
In the night the terror from distant hills  
That shock her brain and destroy the sheltering city.  
Is this the golden promise of tomorrow's harvests  
That rock her withered stand?  
The promise born beneath placid stars  
The promise blended on parental sheets  
That turn to adult misery.  
Do not judge the judged for she has judged  
Herself and found life guilty.  
Push back. Push back the killing dream  
And set her free  
In the shining hours of a yet unquiet life  
Of a yet unburied name.

# JOSEPH DRUCKER

## CHILD

My crippled flesh is with the child mating  
with space in the eye of the sun.

He obeys what his interiors command of self, to be always  
himself, of all things first everywhere in my embrace.

Light quickens over us like a swarm of bees as we leave  
the statue's rotunda, gather blue phlox, marigolds,  
sweet williams.

He at once moves away, joins the rumpled dancers in pirouettes  
of *pas-de-deux*

dips and bends in leaping flames of birth.

He disperses residuum of blocked and rigid molds  
to purify the spirit.

He invokes fabrics of rare breath in stones, in myth-rituals  
as old, as ever new, in a triumph of passion in a calm  
and golden season.

In the growing dust, he has undergone a change.

He leans down witheredly on burdens of space  
and attempts to sing.

His breath is caught short.

Is he about to faint?

Why, in God's name, does his heart pound so?  
As if disembodied, he says: "The nature of the aesthetic  
fashions the only morality, the only truth, left in our  
farewell world: poetry. Poetry as love and being. Poetry  
throbbing in a timeless time, full-panoplied in mercies of space."

He is father only to me.

He sings the imperishable in my soul.

## BROTHER

A music as in a prelude to my flesh is the slow  
movement that is his presence.

He is weightless fibre now, undrossed in softness  
of perception, all-embracing as the rounded sun.

He never strays too far from me, floats off in circles  
about my body, rides the shoals in my storms, sustains  
me with his breath.

He is that part of me that reaches out into tender  
ellipses of the moment in space, a widened curve  
in the moon's grace, largesse in the future of meaning,  
a reversal of total darkness, zero's converse, never  
the mausoleum of dust-to-be in thoughts and memories  
rising out of them.

He is the tree of regenerated landscapes.

He is the seed in stone that throbs a nascent green.

He is the pliable lap, a shield against impinging fears.

He quickens into flame a wisdom in the obsessive heart.

He is the perennial purveyor of warmth and love,  
fructifying the shadowed corners with flowers.

He is the everywhere in infinity.

He is my dead brother who fell into my arms, alive.

## **ELAINE EDELMAN**

### **HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU ARE: 3**

By love was my eye opened  
so wide I drowned in light . . .

Then blue seaflowers came and filled me  
and apple, quince and pear (those heavy blossoms),  
and pale snowflowers, splinters of jade and coral  
cut from the bottom, the heart of the world.  
For I had looked through the skin of a man's frail life  
as through his hand,  
looked past his pain and his desire, as past my own,  
and glimpsed the brightness behind, the wandering song:  
stared down through our earth's tin crust to the face of the sun.  
And gazed at the sun's face hot in the center there  
so long, so straight, my gaze was blackened.

Now the pity lies open —  
pity for myself and for the others  
human, brave, who know the wish to live  
flowers so, only in love,  
and love itself that grave  
our roots must fumble open,  
our loving open and live in.

We are the human beautiful,  
who walk on water.  
Striding the world-flood, disaster,  
knowing well that we too carry it  
lurching within our own lives —

and yet we come  
cold with the bluefire breathing of the sea  
*to moisten the roots of all that has grown.*

Blind, strange, singing . . .  
singing like miners under the heavy hill,  
we carry ourselves for candles.

# **ROBERTOH FABER**

## **ESPALIERS**

Have you seen, in European gardens  
fruit trees against a wall  
grown into a military shape  
standing at Prussian attention  
neat right-angled and two-dimension flat  
as though some blast had stung them there,  
years ago

Limbs emerging at  
unsymmetrical unofficial  
places long ago  
trimmed off and the  
remaining ones out-  
stretched to be  
slipped into their mittens,  
bent at the elbows and  
pegged into grid-place —  
In their sheltered garden  
well-cared-for and receiving  
the maximum amount of sunshine;  
free of weeds and grubs and getting  
controlled and proper amounts of moisture,  
soil periodically loosened, fertilized  
and properly mulched for the  
greatest production of fruit

Why are they not free, said the puzzled wind  
outside the garden wall  
consenting to be dwarfs for  
fruit for whose sake?  
has not a tree the right  
to its own waving growth?  
why said the wind are they not only  
slaves but crucified?

## THE FAT CATS HAVE ALWAYS

the fat cats have always  
                                 in their own way  
been Dionysian  
                                 cautioning Apollonianism  
to the middle classes  
                                 cautioning  
the middle way to the middle classes  
while as Veblen points out  
those at the top and bottom  
emulate each other  
in non-moderate behavior  
while the middles label the bottom psychopaths  
but slavishly reverence the uppers.  
After all, they've got to resent somebody,  
don't they, for their self-chosen walking-death?

he whom they thought a fool  
was the leader of the revolution  
treachery they cried but no  
the treachery was yours and did you not say  
*Imitate Us?*

## HE IS BITING HIS OWN HEEL?

He is biting his own heel?  
Yes he has become  
the bitch goddess  
the subliminal snake  
biting his own heel  
the only change he knows is  
    Westminster chime  
accurately repeated on the hour,  
    he thinks “authentically”  
    but authenticity he has not  
at a prime velocity of  
    10,000 Coltranes we will play whole endless  
    shifting auroras of new notes  
    and combinations endlessly, endlessly

## **MARK FISHBEIN**

### **THE MARTYR**

A butterfly, hurled from its dark forest  
where cocoons eat of the apple's fire  
passed the eye-fast that was mine,  
swimming in the mirror of this city  
I am part of, this broken bottleshop.

It touched me and froze my spine  
with wings as a ribbon of sun,  
posed in delicate prayer and vow;  
guided by a ghost it took to the traffic  
and surrendered, beaten, to a bullet raging truck.

That night there was no moon, no clouds,  
the empty black boulevard was cold  
with winds strong from a stowaway depth.  
A machete-terror bound me like a willow dome,  
a womb which felt no wings redden its walls.

## **DOLORES GILES**

### **IRREGULAR LYRIC IN RE FEAR**

As a child, Fear — nearly did me in.  
Everyone and everything  
so tall . . . so threatening . . . so — *all!*

Then came the Kaleidoscope years  
when hope with its cute utopian mirages  
held me so high — that, any brief low  
never caught me below  
the 90th floor.

Ah, but now, when I've lost more than  
a bit, of my greenhouse crispness . . . and  
hope seems to have left me — permanently  
Fear, Fear — once more — *looms LARGE.*

(Somehow, time never got around to handing me  
any of his defenses, but it is possible he  
doesn't issue them to everyone: "Oh, Fear, if  
you only could melt calories!")

Just so as Fear can numb me  
it also makes terrible excursions into the  
arena of my bowels; they become spastic and  
treacherous: disgrace hangs by a nylon thread  
looped casually around my colon.  
Fear is also — the sudden, swift source of  
that emergent lake, which presses  
so alarmingly  
on — my vulva.

If love taketh away all Fears  
could just *one* person's love . . . do it?  
Shall I investigate commune living, loving?  
Are fat and fifty explorers tolerated fully  
or briefly . . . or just — never?

You, out there, I beg you — *please*  
never fear the commitment of warm  
kisses, well-timed; the cooling of  
a hot tear ... the calming of the  
providential embrace: *commitments are*  
*for burning* ... and did you know, not  
all burns leave scars? With a *good* love  
you've got a living graft. Don't you secretly love saying,  
“I gave” ... have I talked you into anything a casualty of  
Fear, could swim to ... ?

## I DON'T APOLOGIZE

Only a washed-up, tired-blood woman could  
cooly sip Postum as Billy Eckstine, purrs  
salty /sultry through — “Blues You're the Mother  
of Sin” . . . 3:54 seconds of smokey meanness!

Worse yet, it's a far-gone, long-departed woman  
who listens to 16:51 seconds of Billy Eckstine  
over arid over again, without lighting one  
cigarette . . . or (restlessly) toy with ice  
cubes — in a sinful measure of growler-rushing gin.

Only thing keeping that woman  
glued together is that she thinks  
‘She’ — holds Billy captive, anytime  
she puts that needle in that groove.

## **ANDREW GLAZE**

### **MAKING COUNTRY**

What a grand job that was,  
making country!  
Two weeks  
on the peaks and steeps of mountains,  
and holes and runnels,  
dressed at the tips  
with feathers of copses.

Remembering, with oceans, the trick  
is to fill them exactly to the brim  
and line them with beaches  
in neat verges.

Rake out the sand like a white unreeling,  
and tick a picket of palm trees  
here and there along the edges  
like brushes.

Afterwards,  
devoting the hours of a couple of days  
to broadcasting deserts,  
powdering the sand between wastes of boulders.

Walking off by moonlight later  
scouring the channels of rivers,  
scattering streams among hills.  
They glow in the dark  
like silver lines on a map!

Then hanging it up overhead  
(it shines like a jewel)  
giving a twist,  
getting it steady-heartedly moving about.  
its own individual speed.  
(that takes a most delicate hand).  
Then stand off —  
look at it there!  
Violet, green and coral.  
spinning like a world!

## **ROBERTA GOULD**

### **IN MEMORY OF MARIANNE MOORE**

*(February, 1972)*

#### I.

The slow snow  
on the same street  
as night falls  
falls as flakes  
of dandruff  
purple in glare  
of street lamp  
harsh in phlorescence  
and fact.

#### II.

This is where  
she must have sat  
to gather up her nerve  
to sing alone  
as the mad might  
on songless days  
of suicide  
when crawling hatred circled home  
the war at last begun

#### III.

Elegant, sophisticated, deft,  
cool and noble in gift  
yet this to serve  
when living claimed its voice  
as others set the tone  
(fashion, diversion)  
with hieratic sneers  
and smiling fiddle  
in the arrogant name of art

IV.

City of hatred  
city of the free  
who'll damage all  
the lack of stars allows  
lay her cold frame to rest  
beneath the streets  
and drive along  
to pleasure, food and fun  
The times are prosperous  
if you are rich  
the day's a good one  
if you frame your feet  
and never look beyond  
or linger on  
the past or unseen land  
your brothers bomb

V.

She was finally weary  
and useless as always  
in all but fire and spirit  
which last beyond the crumbling  
of these towers  
growled prayers go forth from  
up their piece of sky

## **ANOTHER POEM, ANOTHER CHILD, DIED BY BURNING**

*(Nugen Son Doc, 1959-1969)*

When devils rule you aflame pray  
for a future in unborn eyes  
where living you'd love unfettered  
and sing what now you say

your body wanes and the ash  
crumbles to the cursed ground  
a thoughtless lull pervades the day  
no eyes spark, no teeth gnash

and a hot breeze scatters you  
as if defeated by loss  
of body and a house to lay  
your image in, the one time drew

with indifferent finger, as I  
watched the fire you wore  
consume your flesh to slay  
the angel that would not die

## **EIGHTH AVENUE ACT, or THE MOUSE IN THE LIQUOR STORE WINDOW**

Dream nosed, sniffing at the wine  
stacked in the West Side window,  
I caught his tiny eye and with my thumb  
led him, as a star, across the glass.

He followed fixed, then as a biped rose,  
tried to get firm hold of one thin bottle,  
transparent tower he would climb erect —  
that dazzling circus performer.

And he explored his city, sealed and set,  
beneath the store front spot light — what an act!  
that mythic mouse I gazed in wonder at,  
transfixed until the corner clock struck twelve.

## **JOHN GUENTHER**

### **FELINE**

And you, Feline, are God knows where,  
Slinking about with a cat's stare,  
Loose on Lex, thirsty on Third,  
Cadging drinks for a dirty ward,  
Tagged on Second, out on First,  
And never stopping to count the cost  
As long as the song and dancing last.

I saw you go, I tried to say  
Others before you went this way,  
Sick for love and the counterfeit  
Hands and voices offering it;  
But you wouldn't listen to such as I,  
Forcing a smile, waving goodbye —  
Not while you live, not if you die.

Prowling the shiny city street  
As the lights go up on another night  
And Daly's Dandelion glows,  
You bloom out there like a winter rose,  
Burning white in the evening air.  
Never mind how you found this place.  
You stalk the room with a catlike pace,  
Table to table, chair to chair.  
The eyes follow your burning hair,  
Brushed back from a pale white face,  
A hurt mouth and a cat's grace,  
And other strangers find you fair.  
I wish you well and give you peace —  
Not that I miss you, not that I care.

## TRUE NORTH

I never thought you were south.  
I could tell by your mouth,  
Too taut, unsmiling  
For easy beguiling.

Perhaps, I said, you were east,  
Strange with the taste  
Of salt air from the sea  
When you came to me,  
But how could I hold you fast  
When you would not rest?

No, you were gone,  
Lost again, and then,  
Alone once more at last,  
I thought you were west —  
A strong wind, and cold,  
That used to blow, when I was a boy  
Over Indiana, across Illinois,  
Where I sat by the firelight  
In the winter night.

But you were none of these,  
Soft south, strange east, cold west.  
North suits you best.  
Woman with a child's face and body,  
Young, enchanting, not imperious, proud,  
And constant, never-failing —  
Pole-star to travelers, beacon in the dark,  
Be my luck.  
My compass is your face.  
When you go forth  
The needle swings true north.

## **HANNELORE HAHN**

### **DISORDERED MAGNET**

There's a lodestone  
Deep inside  
Me  
Which registers directions  
Wrong  
Fools me  
And leads me  
Astray.

I wanted to go  
South  
But was pulled  
North  
Which I thought I had left.

Again I'm snowed  
Again my heart freezes  
And I was so sure  
I was heading for the  
Thaw.

Disordered planet  
Heading for the  
Freeze  
Shooting off-course  
Solong.

## **THE TIME OF YOU**

The time of you was long ago,  
When I thought every creak on the stair was you.  
And it was.

The time of not you is now,  
When I think every creak on the stair is only  
    old wood growing older.  
And it is.

## **RONALD HOBBS**

### **LAMA POEM**

*(Sangre de Christo Mountain Love Song)*

In front of your little house  
where you can stand and watch the blood of Christ  
pour upon the mountains of his blood's name  
there is a memory of a night  
we hurled our hammers at the sky  
And threw our arms about the moon, and each other.

What to do but appraise eyes,  
disappear into the sphere of oval candle  
and re-emerge lovers?

Some night soon, when the world is rock still —  
when there is not even the tinkling of a glass —  
when the last echo of the last laughter of the last joke  
totally unwinds and drifts like a web onto the night snow  
— when stars are shy girls dropping their light through space  
you might see a form, a naked ghost,  
pilfering beer cans and cow bones.

There's no guessing just how you will see it.  
Surely you will not see him as clearly  
as the huge women who recline in blankets  
about your horizons and sleep now as cold as ice.

In summer no one is surprised  
when they lean up on sunset elbows  
to look into the desert mirror  
and later, in moonlight, dance.  
Now they will not even notice  
as you inspect the snow while peeing;  
as you pause in awe of night's orang'd trees  
and wonder at the something that is not quite there  
but is — like the Kiowa spirits, or the  
summer rain that falls on Ute Mountain.

## **REMBERT HERBERT**

### **I COME WITH THE LAUNDRY**

I come with the laundry, having  
just ruined your favorite blouse  
by washing it with orange sheets.  
I pulled the neatly folded load  
up a long hill in a two-wheeled cart.  
Halfway up, a wet cardboard box  
full of chicken necks lay on the sidewalk  
unattended but by the flies.

Lying on a bare mattress  
you are staring at one of its buttons.  
“Well, it doesn’t matter;  
Throw the blouse away.”  
I am coming up the hill  
pulling the flawed wash.  
“What are you thinking?  
You never tell me, you never tell me.”  
You turn away, I never tell you, turn  
tightly away, your face to the wall.  
I see myself out the window  
pulling the flawed wash up a hill.

## **BARBARA A. HOLLAND**

### **STORM WARNING**

The nature of brick:  
its texture may be extracted  
from brick and applied  
to anything else,

leaving what? The answer  
awaits in a bowler hat, which dominates  
a cluster of clouds  
skimming the rigidity of collar.

Question no mysteries.  
In their own time  
they will move in with you,

Then a waterfall will hang  
as a curtain to your shower.

If you slip through behind it,  
one twist of either  
hot or cold will liberate  
a thousand jets of sand.

And it may be tomorrow.

## A CUP OF COFFEE

When you lift the sash  
of your window, up goes  
wherever you are behind the upper one,  
and it remains there, writhing  
with apple boughs, galloping  
with a headlong meadow nowhere,  
while being its usual self in motion,

but outside and underneath, my present  
situation spies on you.

Fire-escapes scuttle  
under a roofing of heavily drifted  
snow, climb into tree tops,  
or harass the base of a village spire,

and you sip your coffee, not yet  
willing to recognize the texture  
of the wind that cools it,

staring at what you expect to see,  
which actually rattles  
above your head, trapped between two  
sheets of glass like the twin  
fake lenses composed of the business  
of ants that were framed  
into spectacles for Salvador Dali.

Then, when you slam your window shut,  
the meadow and orchard  
telescope into your recent  
illusion, driving both it and mine  
to their customary distances,

and once again the fire-escapes  
threaten my neighbors' windows.

## SO THERE, DESCARTES!

I have had all the time  
in the universe to examine that table,

the rug,

the chair,

and still I am not  
convinced of his departure.

But he has disappeared. He took his feet  
away when lie removed  
his head, shirt, tie and coat;  
everything he was  
above the table.

Maybe  
he left his feet in front  
of the door to his top floor room.

I shall waste  
no time in climbing  
all those stairs  
to see.

He should be behind  
that unreplenished cup. An obstinate  
fold of his overcoat  
laps down darkly

at the side of his chair.

I would never allow myself  
to interfere with the reveries  
of a secret agent,

                  who could be  
the muse. The saboteur, subversive  
and obvious as always!

## ELEGY FOR ALEXIS

What sort of wind, Alexis,  
covets your house? What kind of claw  
slips over balustrade and grabs your guest,  
leaving the slender ledge a legacy of gusts,  
that tell the searching host no tales of sills below,  
counting down twenty stories through the death blue haze  
to asphalt and the smash that ends all stories.

What sort of wind, Alexis,  
wept within your rooms and wiped  
the stars from all the windows on the night-hung edge  
above the senseless reeling of the universe,  
that filled all space with panic force  
and swept you over, bowled bar-bell  
brace of door block from its lock on life  
and drove the hoofs of stallions through your loneliness?

What sort of wind, Alexis, breeds within  
the ear that listens for you and behind the eye  
squinting up height of wedge at fork of avenues  
to last brink of mortality, that climbs beyond  
the indecisive glide of paper scraps on thermals swirled  
past your last floor on earth to where you are?

What sort of wind, Alexis, urges us  
to seek you as you once had sought, to know  
only the thin line of the parapet where dust  
is rushed in endless search of self  
where there is none?

## KRISHNA IN THE AFTERNOON

One of my many selves  
sits on the grass with the children,  
driven by wonder at the marvels  
that come through our eyes  
to sing in the chapels of our heads.

Where the two brows come together,  
perched beyond bridge of the nose as a bird,  
Krishna alights and the sun on the cymbals  
bursts with him on the darkness  
we have yet to break.

Suddenly wind rises. The finger cymbals  
are stilled. I am another self  
with a workday tomorrow and today,  
as the death of my incense,  
grown down to the burning of my hand.

## **ROBERT KRAMER**

### **AS MY DAUGHTER SCREAMED IN THE NIGHT**

From my pre-dawn dream  
I was awakened  
by a sudden scream from hers.  
First fragment from without,  
intruding into my  
nocturnal world of sleep;  
then I heard the final note  
awake, still piercing from her bedroom,  
stumbled through the darkness  
(toenail scraping chairs)  
to her bedside,  
felt her body taut and trembling.  
I reassured with words banal,  
and clasped her hands in mine.  
Her fists, so tightly clenched,  
relaxed, her heaving chest grew calm.  
She, still half-asleep,  
said, "Good-night, Daddy."  
I smiled in darkness, hoped  
she'd passed the worst of nightmare —  
and returned to mine.

## LIKE THE SEVERED HEAD STARING

Like the severed head staring  
at its languid trunk  
beneath the guillotine,  
into the mirror you peer  
and see but the face of a clock.  
Chatter futilely  
like a wasp in a jug, await  
the invisible leeches of time  
to lock with the night;  
blink, avert your eyes  
beneath the cool gaze  
of the clock —  
with the hermetic terror  
of the fevered child  
locked in his nightmare.

## AFTER-LOVE SONG

Once souls and bodies close  
as lid and turning eye,  
our lines of love ran skew;  
and then the process of forgetting  
like the gradual fading  
of a bad photograph.  
Now in utter silence  
listen to the sounds  
of your sole companion  
as he eats.  
While the ancient parrot  
sates his avian lust  
on mirror image,  
not yet attained  
the sterile land  
of resignation.

## **ANN KREGAL**

### **TO AN OLD MAN DYING OF AGE LOSING HIS MEMORY**

call back

from that passageway  
of black and glowing crystal  
where the light of midnights  
brighter than the noon a  
vestibule radiating outward  
to enter vistas smaller  
than a seed; closing inward onto  
valleys larger than the sea

call

back while what's called 'knowing'  
remains with you this evanescent  
instant even while your private  
infinity of incidents circumvent  
beyond themselves as you yourself  
must go — beyond yourself

all incidents being incidental in  
themselves, their essence only  
joining the gigantic memory, so  
now to lose their superfluities;  
the place in time of  
certain boat calls, certain  
gull cries, a whispered  
phrase . . .

then lose them,  
justifiably so for they are  
swollen, pregnant with a greater  
import than could be known in  
knowing them

losing them  
then quickly, quick now before  
you too must leave from that  
passageway of black and  
glowing  
crystal, the light of midnight  
brighter than the noon  
call  
call back  
so

## **FOR J.H., WHO ESCAPED GENOCIDE, 1940**

you escaped to England  
and they left soon for Auschwitz

yet before the Nazis entered  
Holland you reached your friends'  
house from Vienna and in the early  
morning only you awake, watched milk-  
men leave the milk at courtyard  
gates and the flowerman  
leave tulips

## IN OUR ENCLAVE

in our enclave we taste minutes

(hear rumbles on the roof?  
... the sky is falling)

exquisite in their simplicity

(hear the trampling feet)

enwrapped in each other and still-  
ness (roaring surrounds us)

could we draw clo-  
ser and closer  
to disappear  
forev-  
er  
?

## **DONALD LEV**

### **WEALTH**

hoard of gold  
dragon cold eyed  
breathing flames of ice  
that flesh melts ice  
which retains the fire  
that first spat up the dust  
that mothered and fathered adam  
spear covered with rust  
lay by helmeted skull  
where beowulf battled his last  
settlers have builded a wall  
against which kids and loafers pitch nickels —  
and poets scratch in charcoal  
words to baffle daniel

if i were rich  
I'd be rain  
to fall upon  
each thing i have loved in vain

TROUT

# VINCIT VENDITOR

joy to the world  
herald of the  
new day to come  
approaches  
greet him  
he launches  
a whole new order  
he ushers in a  
new spring  
he  
also sells shoelaces

## **WILLIAM J. MATTHEWS**

### **I SEE A BOY SOMEWHERE**

I see a boy somewhere  
arise naked

from the steaming pond of evening,  
shivering in the cold sun  
as beads of darkness  
evaporate from his flesh —

Pale body tightened, tense,  
sunlight flashing

along wet loins and chest, he lifts  
his arms in silent supplication,  
stares into the sun,  
& sublimes into a clear mist

## D. H. MELHEM

### AFTER DINNER

when that taxi pulled off  
when it lurched from your hand toward the  
white man ten feet away  
when it left you standing foot off the curb in a puddle with  
the rain down hard  
my just-eaten chow mein dinner lumped under my heart  
and I stood under the restaurant awning hoping  
male chauvinist  
or that the rain and the night were too thick for him to have  
noticed you on the illumined street  
and I wanted to run to the corner armed  
with my umbrella  
to challenge him  
as he waited obeying the traffic light

and I waited

## FULCRUM

there is a resolution turning all my thought  
to act

as a kernel of wheat intending what is fed  
and to the world of tables and temptations  
I oppose this noise

it is camping outside stillness  
it is a roaring touch that will not leave you  
as it revolves its force and facets  
to your cold eye

there is a revolution turning all my thought  
to armies  
to the worn and passive hand at last accepting  
within its wrinkled pulse the metal chamber  
poised upon  
its turn

## ACCIDENT

crossing the street, he glanced left  
saw death his mother sitting in a truck  
bore down on him  
smashed face that flew forth  
twenty feet to rest      red in the eyes  
light streaming from his brain

### CALL THE POLICE

police are questioning      their questions  
                        lying around the man

a lady gives a handkerchief

long after bearer and the stretcher-borne  
facts like ghosts  
harrow their ground  
translate a man  
to measurement  
from bumper to blood puddle  
equate the rate with  
mass and distance of him

truth cools to mathematics  
intern of the ambulance records  
the patient waited thirty minutes  
bled to death

## COCKROACH: A TRIBUTE

having become accustomed to customs of  
cockroaches  
their patterns of retreat,  
how they learn early  
to free fall from walls when hands  
approach  
how they breed  
in neat brown casings found  
when empty  
their swiftness and persistence, impervious  
to sprays, even professional  
extermination  
dropped from the air  
how patiently they wait in plumbing till the water  
stops

Poison the drain:

yet  
when I'm sleeping  
they creep up  
to sanctuary  
in wallpaper  
that cracked plaster  
I avoid looking  
at

## JOHN BURNETT PAYNE

### MISSOURI SUMMER, 1914

(For *Juris Jurjevics*)

Blue beyond the ridge in the blue Missouri sky  
a boy's kite lives and soars  
its tail multi-colored like any Missouri quilt;  
from the chicken run  
a noisy sentinel-playing guinea-hen *potracks*;  
off, somewhere,  
almost out of time,  
gentle, elusive,  
a rain-dove coos;  
and grandpa knows  
(it is the summer of 1914 in Missouri)  
when the diamondback terrapin surfaces,  
coming out of the clean-running creek  
    for a little Missouri sun,  
that the time is ripe,  
now,  
here,  
for what he's been wanting and waiting to do,  
putting off, dithering about,  
the notion there all along,  
his,  
and he's been walking around his own compulsion,  
    his own need,  
delaying a good fourteen summers now;  
and he reaches for his pocket-knife,  
grateful for the tinker's whetstone,  
the sharp edge,  
workmanship,  
thinking, well after the fact of the century's end

(it is the summer of 1914 in Missouri),  
you need an edge on yourself,  
tools,  
history,  
need to know who and where you are.  
It isn't every summer afternoon  
that a diamondback terrapin,  
eventual record of history, time and consciousness,  
climbs out of the creek for a little Missouri sun.  
And grandpa grabs the terrapin,  
ignoring kicking feet,  
just grateful for the available terrapin,  
ripe, conveniently at hand,  
over-damp  
from the slime and sludge of the fresh-running creek;  
and grandpa carves his initials,  
the summer date, a farm-place in Missouri,  
incisively, on the back of the diamondback terrapin,  
sorry he didn't do it fourteen years earlier,  
when the shock of liberation and realization  
were a little stronger.  
He looks at his handiwork,  
subdued, himself,  
and the terrapin,  
knowing that something is going on,  
that something is happening, has,  
ambles away and sinks back into the clear-running creek.  
I've survived the nineteenth century,  
leaving it in shambles behind me,  
and I'm making it,  
keeping a little ahead.  
The diamondback terrapin  
testifies for me.

Lucky, both of us,  
to get out of the nineteenth century  
our wits, faculties, good health intact.  
Don't think that I could do it again,  
live it out, survive, the way I did, if I had to:  
those wars in foreign places,  
unfriendly fighting beyond the ridge  
where the blue kite dives and soars in the blue Missouri sky.  
Grandpa thinks of Robert Fulton, Eli Whitney, Morse, Yankee  
inventors too shrewd for their own good, the patent office;  
and spits in the direction of his south forty  
where the railroad runs,  
remembering the day when freshly-laid track first cut  
through his dancing cornfield;  
another day, coming on all too quickly,  
when freight-rates were more than he could pay;  
a time when frontier towns, once full of hope,  
turned into ghosts of themselves.  
Here I am, and so much is gone, but not, perhaps enough.  
Good riddance to bad rubbish, to bad times, to illusions  
wilder and lonelier than the wilderness.  
Where are the Indians?  
The buffalo?  
The railroads that wisely ran underground?  
Where is the American dream?  
The acres and acres of wild flowers, stretching farther  
than the naked eye might see?  
I like the pattern of the diamondback terrapin,  
always have,  
like it even better now,  
bearing my initials, the summer's year, the farm-place name,  
firmly carved  
with a cleanly-honed pocket-knife.

Diamondback terrapin,  
noble vessel,  
sinking into the clear-running water of the creek,  
marked for the duration of its life  
with the consciousness and fact of mine,  
both of us needing our own edge on history,  
triggered by Missouri doubts,  
deep-cutting, depth-intending,  
putting fiascos, disasters, holocaust well behind  
a boy's blue kite diving and soaring beyond the ridge  
    in the blue Missouri sky  
the contrapuntal sounds of a rain-dove and guinea-hen.

# **SABINA ROSEMAN**

---

## **MAD MAGGIE**

*a painting by Breughel*

what genius, that asks  
a woman to be reasonable  
mad maggie stretched mad  
what but an armored  
breastplate, daggered hand  
to cross the bridge  
past deformed trees  
into deviled mote

wild in your extreme eye  
who but a woman  
would break  
into devil's land  
tear back what was  
rightfully hers  
mad maggie wounded angel  
deviled to devil the devil

## TO A HAMSTER

At its largest six inches of fur  
domesticated for pleasured bondage  
two small eyes which looked past me  
only a furred breathing toy  
until the day the cat somehow  
managed one long nail thru cage  
piercing the small almost inept creature  
the hamster removing itself to far corner  
where patiently it took each small  
piece of paper which was its nest  
holding with delicate precision  
curling each small pieced paper  
into flowered petals  
carefully placing each flower  
forming a mound  
setting itself into center  
then quietly waiting the end

## **JANET SAGE**

### **TO YOU**

I find telephone numbers I have scratched  
on odd pieces of paper, old postcards:  
numbers without names, and I am tempted to call.  
    who will answer to this number?  
a fool, a wise man, someone who wants me,  
    someone who won't?

perhaps even God may connect us across the unknown  
wires of destiny, as we move, alone, together.

*May 10, 1969  
New York City*

## **SUSAN SANDS**

### **SEA CHANGE**

He called me a mermaid, a creature of the oceans,  
he hung iron weights on my hips  
until I sank into his brain.

My graying tendons became fingers  
of his prehensile thoughts. Extending  
airborne, he oiled me with  
slick of his conscience and I slipped  
gratefully into his blood where  
I grew strong again on salt  
and turbulence.

If he ate my arms and legs, never mind,  
I was a fat starfish  
regenerate, I grew back.

I learned to prick him with sea spines  
and destroy his armadas.

I raided his tide-pools like a hungry poacher.  
And now he calls me parasite. He starves me,  
shrinking his veins with metal  
trying to expel me back to the air.

But I have grown too wise to listen to his names.  
Rooted in his blood  
I have grown  
wet gills.

## **LAYLE SILBERT**

### **MAD MONEY**

They threw  
bankbooks, checkbooks and accounts  
(good paper, powerful watermarks,  
ancient paper houses,  
strong leather bindings).  
With bursts of real income  
they diverted money  
which spurted over,  
then hurled after  
coins in rolls  
that broke into showers  
of silver on copper,  
gold bars incognito  
in counterfeit wraps,  
wads of Tsarist rubles,  
CNC, Chinese cash and postwar marks,  
two-sous pieces from country museums,  
and big money bags  
exploding on contact.

The currency caught fire,  
bloated the air,  
spread to structures  
over fences, walls and city boundaries,  
provincial borders.

People in cellars  
during bombardments of money  
died of side effects  
unknown in old wars.

How would you  
like to be on the losing side  
and get your skull cracked  
by a brickbat  
of gold bullion?

## **DENIS SIVACK**

### **IN MEMORIAM: THOMAS MERTON (1915-1968)**

You flew, dove in blue denim,  
cross-water  
to a mountain abbey  
where all windows  
look inward.  
I hear of your death from a friend.  
A fallen olive branch  
ripples in Monk's Pond:  
green and gold shadow-spill,  
seen by the hermit's lantern,  
outlasts the tower struck by lightning.  
The power that killed you  
shatters inward windows;  
carries the death message to us  
by hot wire —  
we understand it  
in the power out of which you lived.  
In dark time we remember your words:

*Suppose the dead could crown their wit  
with some intemperate exercise*

*Or if the wise could understand  
And the world without heart  
That the dead are not yet dead  
And the living live apart<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Merton, "A Responsory, 1948."

You have gone eastward, home  
where the sun does not set.  
The olive branch defies concentric law  
passes the ripple outward —  
the lantern flickers:  
    you touch us with tongue of flame  
and the pond becomes a Holy Fire.

## CROWS AND SHADOWS TELL NO LIES

In death  
the feet get cold first  
taking leave of the body  
like glass from windows  
of an abandoned house.

The hands shed  
their painted skin  
letting the grass grow through.

You do not think these things  
with your mind of winter,  
time out of season of snows,  
looking out at the broken fences  
of lost fields.

As long as crows gather  
covering the evening  
with their darkling wings  
the cherry trees will feel  
their worth.

Tomorrow you will  
put the late afternoon in baskets.  
The wind will see you through.

The long growth watch lengthens.

Crows and shadows tell no lies  
breaking the darkness to you.

## **THEY, WHO HAVE ASKED FOR NOTHING**

I live in a room full of paper.  
Because my eyes are sand

the fires cannot burn me.  
I am defined

by portraits of medieval men,  
wool-merchants and salters.

When I sleep your shirt  
cuts into my skin.

When I look into the mirror  
I see your stomach.

Though I cannot play guitar  
I would build a harpsichord

upon a mountain;  
would give you all I own:

the kettle of silverfish,  
who have shared my life

in their comings and goings,  
who have asked for nothing,

they, who have watched with me  
for the first hours of tomorrow,

who have crawled from the Father of Lies  
and have called his firstborn, Morning.

## MANES KEEP TO THEIR PLACES

In the inner room  
the alabaster lady waits

combing her long green hair.  
Her fists are jaded with the scent  
of lilac crush flowing through  
yesterday's fingers.

Her eyes are the insides of shells  
oyster gray looking into morning.

You cannot wait.  
The day is turning

into stone.  
From the far side of the garden

incensed birds are singing  
of the growing of trees

filling with oranges.  
You put a mango to your lips

breaking the juice vault of the sun.  
The earth is moving

like a river at your feet.  
Flowers shall grow in your hair.

## **ANALYST**

I met you in your fear  
out of a long time cowering;  
spread to you laughter,  
stolen from some dead self,  
fathering, lovering;  
changing my faces  
to change your taunted stare,  
in animation there to make you see.  
I was your needed rascal  
at end of darkness —  
until your play turned you.  
You could wander the day away  
from a fearsome self or faceless lover.  
We were left roleless;  
had only our naked selves to meet:  
One meeting one where charm had fled.  
Against untroubled you I was  
cold somber and sober,  
while you were a Janus-faced child of dream.

## LEE STROTHERS

### POSTCARD FROM DACHAU

The stream we crossed was hidden by reeds.  
So narrow a blade of grass separates  
    the compound from the shed,  
    the living from the dead.

The entrance to Hades is through a shower stall.  
Beyond are ovens, dark and cold.  
The shades are but faded photographs,  
their utterances scribblings in a book  
    the outraged tourist writes —  
    gaunt agony looks on.

I, Odysseus, sought a countryman,  
one of the three-hundred, a Theban by birth,  
to learn how long the sea parts me  
from lands and home, woman and child.  
    The crest and trough of a wave —  
    birth and death of a man.

If one slays the black ram and ewe,  
he may summon by the blood of his blade  
all whom the Queen of Hell sends.  
Although I've poured libations into this pit —  
mead, wine, water, and scattered the corn,  
the anemone alone reveals their blood.

Phantoms remain formless, the Seer mute.  
I had expected to find my mother here,  
the brooding warrior and murdered king,  
    to talk of burning cities  
    and destinies of men.

The phantoms have fled this accursed place  
to flicker among the wine-dark dreams of drunkards.  
A blade alone separates  
    the compound from the shed —  
    living from the dead.

## SUMMER UNENDING

*for Charles Devlin*

In summer's hushed shimmer we sat  
at the pond's edge watching the wood opposite  
reflected — a unison of leaves.  
Long drought bared the bank to baked clay  
and the water grew turgid with bass and sunfish.  
As fin or mouth broke the surface at a gnat  
ripple upon ripple eroded the inverted unity.

You ask how a writer can use it.  
The painter who owns this land must have learned  
something.  
See how he builds up his pigment like bricks.  
Except for children who raise an unbaited trap  
only to throw back what they catch by chance  
he permits no one to fish his private domain.  
Rod and reel lean together on the porch.

I accept with silence the grace of a small bird  
tentative at the edge caught in reflection.  
Something more than metaphor  
beckons us beyond those leaf-points  
breaking into ever-changing patterns  
upon the shrinking pond's bronzed green patina.

# THE BET

On the day Uncle Ralph died  
the chambers in his house moaned  
as the wind dusted the opaqued windows and halls  
cluttered with the clippings and parings of his life:  
his self-winding watch, timed by pulse or crap-shooting;  
vial of pyrites, junked among his brass Chinese coins,  
pinochle decks and Keno cards in the top bureau drawer;  
and *Police Gazettes*, hoarded by date in the closet  
witnessed the losses, failures, mortgages  
ebbing away the vessel of his life  
ruptured by a clot the size of a die  
flooding his brain with an ocean of blood,  
darkness and accumulated guilt.

And he, though often warning me  
against the abalone vice in dark waters,  
caught his own hand beneath the hard rock of his heart  
before flickering out between station breaks  
(Grandma clutching a can of beer, squinting  
a commercialful, not daring to answer his call  
from the last vacant room in the house), and he died —  
sealed up against life chamber by chamber,  
a nautilus circling its rose roulette,  
reaching toward the outer rim of his horn,  
drowning in the morning tide —  
light shattering the casements of his eyes,  
sound dredging the sand-clogged conches of his ears.

## **P.K. VOLLMUTH**

### **QUESTION FOR ANOTHER MOTHER**

No, you are not my mother  
Not pain blessed purveyor  
Of that beam of blood  
That pushed out impressing bondage  
On one more not quite selfhood

Rather you are flint  
Cognizant to almost kindled woodness  
In hope that even splinters fly  
And petrified to black agate  
The tree shall be green-leaved

Mother not the one  
Who having torn me  
From a fleecy womb  
In two days labor loving  
And after sweat in twenty  
Years of growth

Still could not explain  
The why and how of man  
In consummate patience  
Failed to break my chains  
Failed to reach me beyond  
The quaking question  
Why even in our beauty  
We are contrary?

Mother, named just friend  
Can you let me know  
If i am even half a poem  
Or only milkweed sparkle on the wind

Carpet this stone dungeon  
Paced still within  
Quiet monotone of sleep

Convince me that these words  
Which build citadels of dubious distinction  
Are worthy of the struggle thru a birth

You who learned to sing  
Before my eyes distinguished  
More than light and dark  
Apprise me of the reason  
That we burn

And if you can believe  
That human is a little more  
Than bits and pieces hung on racks of bone  
Tell me why i'm still uneasy  
As i stand out here alone.

## ACTORS

We play whatever role is easiest  
Erect structures no more than facade  
Godlike, do not show a face

Thru masks, become as natural as skin  
We peer in stark terror that a glance  
Shoot past these exteriors

As actors, we must always spin  
Networks of phantasy  
Only to be spiders meshed  
In our own webs  
Stuck on misplaced hypocrisy

Then he is most convincing  
In a sometime Hamlet suit  
Every bit as i wear well  
This Faust in drag

We are hungry tigers  
In an eat-or-be-devoured farce  
Cannibals, we wait for nakedness  
The scent of flesh  
Beneath a crack in costume

Until we are swallowed by illusion  
Envision into looking glass  
No familiar feature  
Strangers even to ourselves  
Wander in and exit  
On a Maya stage called life.

## PSYCHIC MASOCHISM

i am splintered on this bed of nails  
Strung solemn, beat bizarre  
In one odd, syllabic metre  
i ought, must know  
You touch me for most trivial of reasons

Yet i cling upon it,  
Clutching bone to bone  
Hand to hand in metaphysic combat  
Protracting the intrigue  
Till its weights be counterbalanced

You are supine upon your crucifix  
Awaiting morning's resurrection  
Glued into my meagerly-responding flesh  
Into early stillness i know again  
How i must leave  
Forbid another rising to that  
Angry bird of blood  
That is such weakness in my womanhood

To sling me as one solitary feather  
Blown here and there  
Without guidance of a wing  
(The hunter of the night will search  
For some more proud pinion than i)  
Because i cannot believe that the feast  
You set before me  
Is not some charismatic drug

That will splinter me upon this bed of nails  
Leave my hard head scourged by wanton salt  
In trader winds, struck solemn, beat bizarre  
That i while somber champion of the dark  
Still never wished the sun to fail

## **DICK WHIPPLE**

### **TO SUZANNE FARRELL**

There she dances —  
The Muse in Tchaikovsky's head  
Nijinsky's spiritual mate  
Mocking gravity  
Lightly guiding electrons through a love affair with beauty  
Toes touching where she pleases,  
Making forever ripples in the cosmos  
Herself fitting between whorls of atoms  
Light as moon-bound/free  
Freeing the earth from its own weight  
Dictating orbits of ethereal moment  
As balanced she turns fingertips  
To wed dimensions into unique spasms  
That couldn't have been  
But persist within the behoden  
Soul-raised by immense powers  
Unmarked but temptingly felt

Existence can't be ordinary ever  
Again  
As indeed now it never  
Was.

## CURSE THE CANDLES

With your rose on my snuff  
And nine amassed-aligned stars on our side  
Walpurgis Night wasn't all it should have been  
And I'm beginning to question my own fantasies  
About rubbing this there and grunging it  
against a springy new icicle  
Hateful prospect it is  
To now doubt my own flower farts  
And upend the whole rash business of gropehope itself  
But this is where a poet says *but* and explains himself  
And I can't sanity clause any more  
The explanations are as dead as the best that was done  
Were you frightened because I told you  
    how nice I imagined it —  
Or does the earth stop by free will?

## **EUNICE WOLFGRAM**

### **WENDY**

wendy was a werewolf, and this complicated her life because every month when it was full moon she couldn't make any money, and she resented the time taken from her, so she went to a dealer in herbs and asked him to give her something for her problem. he sold her some nice smelling blue herbs, and she went home and took them.

the next full moon she turned into a nun.

### **TWO**

two was ritchie's number, two had won for him many times, both at the track and in the numbers game.

two was uncomplicated

and he never forgot like he did so many other things, two was always there for him always faithful, not like people.

on the second

day of the second month he put two dollars

on the number two horse

in the second race to win and the horse came in second.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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*Commonweal*

“In Memoriam: Thomas Merton,” Denis Sivack.

*Dasein*

“Trout,” Donald Lev.

*Epos*

“Manes Keep to Their Places,” Denis Sivack.

*Folio*

“Making Country,” Andrew Glaze.

*Gyro*

“Mad Maggie,” Sabina Roseman.

*Hanging Loose*

“How Beautiful You Are: 3,” Elaine Edelman.

*Hyn Anthology*

“Wendy,” Eunice Wolfgram.

*Olga Cabral Kurtz*

“5 & Dime” and “An Old Man in Camden,”

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*Life of Touching Mouths*

“Gaze,” “Opus,” and “The Store at the Back of Her Garden,”

by Vinnie-Marie D’Ambrosio, from *Life of Touching Mouths*,

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*New York Quarterly*

“Feline,” John Guenther. “Wealth,” Donald Lev.

*Notes on 94th Street*

“After Dinner,” “Fulcrum,” “Cockroach: A Tribute,” “Accident,”  
by D.H. Melhem, from *Notes on 94th Street*, Copyright 1972 by  
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*Penumbra*

“Elegy for Alexis,” Barbara A. Holland.

*The Reconstructionist*

“On the Fifth Anniversary of Bluma Sach’s Death,”  
Vinnie-Marie D’Ambrosio.

*Sanskaras*

“To a Hamster,” Sabina Roseman.

*The Small Pond*

“Krishna in the Afternoon,” Barbara A. Holland.

## **ABOUT THE NEW YORK POETS' COOPERATIVE**

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*Compiled from the notebooks of Barbara A. Holland, who scheduled all the group's readings in its early years, and from notes provided by Robert Kramer.*

The membership of New York Poets' Cooperative varied as poets joined and departed. One list in Barbara A. Holland's notebook included 24 poets as members. Robert Kramer provided another members' list from 1974. The combined list is as follows:

Jacob Bush  
Edward Butscher  
Richard Davidson  
Elaine Edelman  
Mark Fishbein  
Dolores Giles  
Andrew Glaze  
Roberta Gould  
Hannelore Hahn  
Rembert Herbert  
Ronald Hobbs  
Barbara A. Holland  
Sabina Jacyna  
Percy Johnston  
Robert Kramer  
Anne Kregal  
Olga Cabral Kurtz  
Donald Lev  
Al Levine  
David Levine  
Diane Levenberg  
William J. Matthews  
D. H. Melhem  
Claudia Menza  
Patrick Merla  
Stanley Nelson  
Pasmanik, Wolf

John Burnett Payne  
Shirley Powell  
Janet Sage  
Layle Silbert  
Denis Sivac  
Miriam Solan  
Lee Strothers  
Karen Swenson  
P. K. Vollmuth  
Dick Whipple  
Ozzie Williams  
Irene Willis  
Eunice Wolfgram

The following is a partial list of poets who were featured at the weekly readings and other events sponsored by The New York Poets' Cooperative. Barbara Holland left reading schedules, and hand-written summary list of poets who had read between 1971 and 1974. Some names were added from several 1979 Poets' Cooperative programs held at the Donnell Library. Readers for the intervening years were not in sources available at press-time. Many of these names are transcribed from written notes, so spelling may be inaccurate for some.

Adamson, Eve	Cruff, Mary E.
Aprile, Joseph A.	Curran, Donald
Austeenmuhl, Ed	Cushen, Karen
Back, Karen	Czys, Irene Anne
Ball, Alan R.	D'Ambrosio, Vinnie Marie
Bandelspinner, Bettina	Darr, Ann
Bankes, Lynn	Davidson, Richard*
Barrow, Charles T.	DeFazio, Marjorie*
Bass, Madeline	DeSilva, Margot
Behrman, George*	Dragonette, Ree
Benig, Irving	Drucker, Joseph*
Bigelow, Lisa	Duberstein, Helen
Brady, Anne	Duplessis, Nancy
Brafman, Allen	Durso, Rick
Butscher, Edward	Edelman, Elaine
Calhoun, Peter	Elliott, Sara
Congdon, Kirby	Evans, Jephtha
Corbett, Dennis	Faber, Robert Oh

Faredi, Judith  
Ferrari, Mary\*  
Finnell, Marjorie E.  
Fishbein, Mark  
Fleisher, Berenice  
Fox, Siv Cedering  
Friedman, Dan  
Gaess, Roger W.  
Gaglilio, Gen  
Garrison, Peggy  
Gary, Claudia S.  
Gay, Pamela D.  
Gelman, Ron  
Giles, Dolores\*  
Glasgow, Boruk\*  
Glassman, Paulette  
Glaze, Andrew  
Glen, Emilie\*  
Gold, Alan  
Gould, Roberta  
Greco, Emily\*  
Green, Donald  
Green, John  
Gual, Hannah  
Guenther, John  
Hanley, Anthony  
Harris, Marguerite  
Hayn, Annette\*  
Hecht, Roger  
Herman, Melanie  
Hershon, Robert  
Hestis, Shah  
Hobbs, Ronald  
Hoffman, Jerry  
Holland, Barbara A.\*  
Holman, Robert  
Holst, Spencer\*  
Humphrey, James  
Iverson, Lucille  
Jarrett, Emmett  
Johnston, Percy E.  
Kaplan, Eleanor  
Kearns, Richard  
Klahr, Myra  
Korn, Alfred  
Kornberg, Martin  
Kramer, Aaron  
Kramer, Robert  
Kregal, Ann  
Krohn, Herbert  
Kunstler, Frank  
Kurtz, Olga Cabral  
Larkin, Joan  
Latta, Richard  
Lawder, Donald  
Lessing, Edward  
Lev, Donald\*  
Levine, Al  
Lillquist, Kenneth  
Lindell, Doe  
Livingston, Gary  
Livingston, Patricia  
Locke, Robin S.  
Lorde, Audre  
Lowenfels, Walter  
MacDonald, Cynthia  
Malekba, Gloria  
Mammen, Edward W.  
Melhem, D. H.\*  
Merla, Patrick  
Mikenas, Edward  
Milstein, Stuart\*  
Morgan, Richard  
Mosler, Charles  
Murphy, Frank\*  
Murray, Catherine\*  
Nelson, Stanley  
Newman, Louis\*  
O'Brien, Michael  
Packard, William  
Paley, Grace  
Paris, James R.  
Payne, John Burnett\*  
Pell, Lewis  
Percehow, Henri  
Peters, Robert

Pierce, Richard	Silbert, Layle
Piochowski, Krystyna	Silver, Howard
Porthy, Gregory	Silverman, Herschel
Powell, Shirley*	Sivack, Denis
Prada, Beatrice Maria	Snyder, Elaine
Press, Simone	Solan, Miriam
Quist, Susan	Speath, Merrie
Redmond, Michael	Spalding, Ron
Rees, Gomer	Steingesser, Martin
Reinhold, Robert	Stepanchev, Steven
Robson, Ernest	Stock, Robert
Rose, Harriet	Story, James C.
Roseman, Sabrina J.	Strothers, Lee
Rosten, Norman	Swenson, Karen
Ruby, Kathryn	Tucker, Harvey
Russo, Diane	Unterecher, John
Rutherford, Brett*	Vasquez, Paul
Sanchez, Sonia	Verne, Beatrice
Sands, Susan	Vollmuth, P. K.
Saslow, Helen	Vrbowska, Anca
Sassman, Paulette	Wallace, Pat
Savrousky, Serge	Whipple, Dick
Sayhovic, Olivera	Wiese, Juel
Schell, Susan	Williams, Ozzie S.
Schopick, Julia	Witten, Anne
Schor, Susan	Wolfgram, Eunice
Scott, Nancy	Zario, Richard A.
Shands, Annette	Zeldis, Chayym

\* Poets also appearing in Poet's Press editions.



# The Poet's Press

PITTSBURGH, PA

## **ABOUT THIS BOOK**

The body text for this book is Plantin. Several attractive modern fonts, including Galliard and Plantin, are based on typefaces originally designed by Robert Granjon (1513-1589), a prolific type designer and founder active in Paris, in the shop of Christoph Plantin, and later in Rome at the Vatican. In 1913, Monotype issued several versions of Plantin, based on some of Granjon's designs. Section and main titles are set in Franklin Gothic Black. Poem titles are set in Schneidler Black.

